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## 108 Great Places meeting Thursday

### Public forum to discuss Keokuk's needs, assets

BY THE DAILY GATE CITY

In conjunction with Iowa's new Great Places initiative, a meeting will be held at Keokuk City Hall Thursday following the Keokuk City Council workshop.

The public will have the opportunity to discuss the needs of Keokuk and how the city can capitalize on its assets and create new assets to bring new investments to Keokuk. The meeting should start about 6 p.m.

"Designing a comprehensive plan for Keokuk's future can be difficult, but only so if citizens do not participate in the planning stages," said Mayor David Gudgel. "It has become very obvious that many Iowa cities have taken advantage of certain Iowa economic development tools to leverage state funds for their own city specific goals and

future."

More than \$43 million was spent in Lee County by tourists in fiscal year 2003, according to the state of Iowa.

"Not only should Keokuk attempt to capture more of the tourist dollars by truly making Keokuk a destination point, but also target the reasons why retail, commercial and industrial ventures gravitate to certain cities," Gudgel said.

"Industrial growth and investment along with retail and commercial investors tend to gravitate to cities that are progressive," he added. "These investors tend to move into areas where citizens decide and realize that dreaming, vision and risk-taking can pay huge rewards."

The city will ask the Great Places Citizen Advisory Board to assign a coaching team to work with it to develop a Great Places offer. Eventually, the city could qualify for Vision Iowa and community and tourism grant funds.